



ESTONIAN QUALITY AGENCY
FOR HIGHER AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Report for Institutional Accreditation and Quality Assessment of Curriculum Groups in VET

Tallinn Health Care College



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Introduction

Institutional accreditation and quality assessment of curriculum groups in VET

'Institutional accreditation' is the process of external evaluation which assesses the conformity of a University or higher education institution's management, work procedures, study and research activities and environment to both legislation and the goals and development plan of the higher education institution itself. This is feedback-based evaluation in which an international assessment panel analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the institution of higher education based on the self-assessment report of the institution and on information obtained during the assessment visit, providing recommendations for improvement and ways of implementing them.

The goal of institutional accreditation is to support the development of strategic management and quality culture that values learning-centeredness, creativity and innovation in the higher education institutions (HEIs), as well as to increase the societal impact of education, research and development delivered by the HEIs.

HEIs are assessed according to twelve standards of institutional accreditation. Assessment focuses on the core processes of the HEI – learning and teaching, research, development and creative activities, and service to society – as well as on strategic management of the organisation and resource management. The learning and teaching process is examined in more detail under five standards (study programme, teaching staff, learning and teaching, student assessment, and learning support processes). Throughout the assessment process, there is a focus on academic ethics, quality culture and internationalisation.

Educational institution must undergo institutional accreditation at least once every seven years based on the regulation approved by EKKA Quality Assessment Council for Higher Education [Guide to Institutional Accreditation](#).

Assessment of the quality of vocational training (hereinafter assessment of quality) is an external assessment, based on an internal assessment, conducted by external independent assessors once in every six years. In the course thereof the performance and sustainability of teaching and education, including the development of curriculum, learning and teaching, leading and management and the use of resources shall be evaluated.

The objective of the quality assessment of vocational education is to foster the development of learning-oriented school culture and to increase the reliability of vocational education.

Quality assessment of vocational education provides an opportunity:

- For the school to get feedback about the quality of the study process and recommendations to develop it and to use the results of an independent external evaluation for the school's strategic management.
- To inform interested groups (learners, labour market, state, the society in general) about how well vocational education meets the national demands, objectives of development plans, labour market needs and expectations of the learners.

Quality assessment of vocational education focuses on the studies.

Vocational educational institution must undergo quality assessment of curriculum groups in VET at least once in 6 years based on the regulation approved by EKKA Quality Assessment Council for VET.

The institutional accreditation and quality assessment of curriculum groups in VET at *Tallinna Tervishoiu Kõrgkool (Tallinn Health Care College, THCC)* took place in November 2019. Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (**EKKA**) compiled an international assessment panel. **The following persons formed the assessment team:**

Anca Greere (Chair)	Professor in English Linguistics and Translation Studies, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania (previously) Quality Assurance Manager, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, United Kingdom
Einike Pilli	Rector, Estonian Free Church Theological Seminary, Estonia
Jarkko Ketolainen	Professor in Pharmaceutical Technology, and Head of School, School of Pharmacy, University of Eastern Finland, Finland
Tiina Freimann	Chief Nurse, Tartu University Hospital, Estonia
Laura Koppel	Student, University of Tartu Faculty of Medicine, Estonia
Marjatta Häsänen	Senior Lecturer, Health and Wellbeing, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Finland
Ruud Heijnen	Coordinator for international cooperation for the faculty of health; Program coordinator for the master program Advanced Health Care, Zuyd University of Applied Sciences
Raul Adlas	Head Doctor, Tallinn EMS

Assessment process

The assessment process was coordinated by EKKA staff - Ms Marge Kroonmäe and Ms Jekaterina Masenko.

After an initial preparation phase where the distribution of tasks between the members of the assessment panel was determined, the work of the assessment panel in Estonia started on Monday, 18 November 2019, with an introduction to the Higher Education System as well as the assessment procedures by EKKA. Members of the team agreed the overall questions and areas to discuss with each group during the site visit and to a detailed schedule for the site visit.

During the following three days, from Tuesday 19th to Thursday 21st of November 2019, meetings were held with representatives of Tallinn Health Care College as well as external stakeholders.

On Friday, 22 November 2019, the Assessment Panel held an all-day meeting, during which the findings were discussed in detail and the structure of the final report was agreed. Findings of the Assessment Panel were compiled in a first draft of the assessment report and evaluation of the 12 accreditation standards.

Visit to the work-places of VET work practice took place next week after the Assessment by panel members Raul Adlas and Einike Pilli, accompanied by EKKA coordinator Marge Kroonmäe.

The Institutional Accreditation Report for THCC consists of three parts: (1) a report on institutional accreditation, (2) a report on quality assessment of three study programmes in higher education, and (3) a report on quality assessment of study programmes in VET. The findings of the study programme assessments are used to inform the full institutional accreditation report, through a form of 'sampling'.

Information about Tallinn Health Care College (THCC)

The predecessor to THCC, the Tallinn Secondary Medical School was established on 16 October 1940, after the consolidation of the Assistant Physicians' school and the Nurses' School. During over the 70 years of the school's existence, professional education has been provided in 11 health care specialities accordingly with the needs of Estonian labour market. From 2005, the school was reorganized into applied higher education institution and also renamed to Tallinn Health College. The title of the college changed slightly in February 2009, now it is Tallinn Health Care College.

In the academic year of 2018/2019, THCC had over 1520 students, which was around 3% of the overall student population HEI in Estonia. In vocational education, the same year, THCC had 433 students, which made up around 1,9% of the student population in vocational education (HaridusSilm).

THCC provides studies in first and second level of higher education, in healthcare and medical study programme groups. Vocational education is provided in fourth and fifth level study programme groups in social work, health care and medicine (in study programme groups, social work and counselling, occupational therapy and rehabilitation, dental care, child care and services for youth and medical diagnostics and treatment technology.). In total, studies are provided in eight higher education and seven vocational education curricula.

THCC aims to provide internationally recognised studies in health and welfare in an up-to-date study environment, to advance the professions taught through research and development, including applied research, to organise refresher trainings, affect public health behaviour and contribute to shaping a healthy living environment.

Impressions of the institution, self-assessment report and of the site visit

Overall, the impressions of the institution are positive and allow for the self-assessment report to contain a number of important commendations. THCC is a well-respected institution within the healthcare sector in Estonia. THCC has been operating for many years to respond positively to the needs of society and requirements within Estonian and the EU legislative context for medical-related studies. The Programmes THCC offers are aligned to employer and stakeholder expectations and frequent interaction with such professional partners ensures that changes can be made and curricula will be updated accordingly. The teaching staff are highly motivated and very committed to the development of the institution and will go above and beyond what is required to support students and the broader society. Students appreciate the modern learning environment and the innovative teaching methods which allow for the students to be individually supported and encouraged. Internships are proving to be a positive educational experience with students reporting it allows them

to refine and deepen their knowledge and skills. The organisation of internships is well appreciated with internship supervisors trained and active in ensuring alignment with Programme learning outcomes and teaching/learning requirements. The multiple projects proposed for the benefit of the Estonian community to raise awareness, educate and support citizens in specific medical scenarios of impact are noteworthy, as is the volunteer involvement of students in such projects. Graduates of THCC are well prepared and highly employable with the majority finding work within their field fairly quickly after graduation. Employers appreciate the thorough knowledge and constructive attitudes graduates come with and find that they are well prepared for the world of work. The engagement of employers and professional bodies is frequent and systematic and has led to relevant updates being achieved across the various Programmes.

Given these positive features, the Assessment Panel was of the opinion that more structured, better communicated and more consistently operationalised strategic plans coupled with a clear vision of institutional future was highly recommendable. A proactive approach and one which could strive to anticipate future needs and propose innovation for higher education would be well suited for THCC. This would entail more attention being given to the good practice being generated within the institution and having strong mechanisms to capture, disseminate, multiply and maintain such good practice at cross-programme level; a more focussed, institutional approach to staff development and training with strategic directions driving decisions about individual and collective development activities; a clearer, better targeted approach to internationalisation with due diligence performed in relation to partnerships and strengthening of internationalisation-at-home initiative; and, a better coordinated research strategy which can directly align with institutional aims.

The Assessment Panel wishes to thank THCC staff for their efforts to present the details of the institution in a comprehensive Self-assessment Document which was deemed analytical and evaluative allowing the Panel to navigate the various areas with relative ease and to identify early on areas which required further scrutiny. The data analyses and presentation in graphs and tables were particularly helpful in giving the Panel a clear quantitative view of the current situation but also allowing an evaluation of trends across multiple years supported effectively by relevant qualitative explanatory information.

The site visit was also well organised with staff, students and other external stakeholders engaging constructively and collegially with the Panel to offer a vivid picture of the THCC learning and teaching experience. The Panel wishes to thank all those who made time for the multiple meetings scheduled and shared candidly their views of various facets of THCC operations and provided relevant feedback which the Panel considered in great depth.

Main changes on the basis of recommendations of the last institutional accreditation

The Assessment Panel noted that the recommendations of the last institutional accreditation had been duly considered as part of planning processes and that actions were completed or under way to address the issues that had been raised.

The College now has a long term financial plan and a version of the website in Russian.

The College has demonstrated its continuous preoccupation for accommodating students with special needs, and for providing English-language electives to ensure more exposure to English for students and staff.

In relation to identifying strategic priorities and governing activities at the College in response to these, the Assessment Panel has found that more efforts are required before an institution-wide approach is achieved for areas such as: staff policy (including workload) and staff development; internationalisation initiatives; and research activities. These would include clear communication of such priorities across all stakeholder groups; better streamlined decision-making processes for approval of initiatives and more formal and systematic capturing of good practice to inform areas of potential growth. In support of these actions, quality assurance systems in use can be further expanded with better targeted and more meaningful benchmarking (nationally, in the Nordic region, at EU level and internationally); more institution-wide rather than programme-level/individual engagements with relevant stakeholders; more clarity on prioritising core activities from supracurricular/extracurricular activities to ensure sustainability of resources. Attention should also be paid to maintenance of existing equipment and diversifying the source of financial support would ensure that core activities would be well protected.

Summary of the institutional accreditation findings

General Findings

The Assessment Panel concluded that THCC was progressing well the recommendations from the previous institutional accreditation and that, overall, there were multiple areas which were positively being implemented and in conformity to the Standards for both HE and VET studies. Resources, Teaching staff and Learning and Teaching stand out as being highly appreciated by stakeholders.

The Assessment Panel found Strategic Management, Internationalisation and Research, Development and/or creative activities to partially conform with more attention needing to be offered to institution-wide, policy-driven, systemic and systematic implementation and development of these areas, the way they are organised, the approval structures which support the activities, the communication mechanisms which are employed and sustainability protection which is offered.

Service to society was deemed unanimously worthy of recognition, with clear acknowledgment that the projects and activities which THCC organises to aid the general population are exemplary and well appreciated by all involved. The opportunities for students' involvement, under supervision, are also noteworthy.

	conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
Strategic management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality culture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic ethics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Internationalisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Study programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning and teaching	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student assessment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning support systems	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research, development and/or other creative activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service to society	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Commendations (list up to 10)

- The College is commended for the institutional approach, which aligns with the mission, to support and encourage students to find value in the work that they do and in their own capacities to engage professionally for the benefit of the wider community. (1.1)
- College staff are commended for the enthusiastic and highly committed attitude to engage with curricular and extracurricular activities in support of students and the wider community. (1.2)
- The College is commended for the modern infrastructure which positively supports educational processes, e.g. simulation centre. (1.2)
- The College is commended for the participation achieved in a range of (international) networks and consortia. (1.5)
- The Teaching Staff are commended for the close academic and pastoral relationship with students, specifically for the individual support offered which students highly value. (1.6)
- The College is commended for the robust alignment of its programmes with society needs. (1.7)
- The College is commended for the effective organisation and meaningful delivery of internships which allow students to gauge the working environment and better achieve learning outcomes. (1.7)
- The College is commended for the wide variety of teaching methods and technologies used in the teaching process, including relevant simulations. (1.8)
- The College is commended for the consistent and sufficient support offered across all study locations. (1.10)
- The College is commended for the wide-ranging, impactful activities it organises in support of Estonian society. (1.12)

★ Worthy of Recognition:

Service to society is evaluated as worthy of recognition with the Assessment Panel agreeing that the breadth and impact of activities undertaken by staff and students in support of the wider Estonian community, and further afield, are notable, as is THCC's involvement in national initiatives (through professional bodies and governmental structures) which have the potential to drive developments in HE, VET and community services.

Areas of concern and recommendations (list up to 10)

- The College should develop mechanisms to make the strategic plans, hence its vision for the future, more visible and manageable to staff and students and ensure communication of all its relevant details so that there is a clear direction of travel for all institutional stakeholders which guides operational and management decisions. (1.1)
- The College should develop a more strategic and proactive approach to leadership, which includes directions with operational implementation making inclusive use of risk identification and management. (1.1)
- The College should strive to clearly articulate and effectively implement its role as an innovative HE institution, which has the capacity to serve society and drive it forward. (1.1)
- The College should develop a more strategic, better coordinated approach to continuous professional development of staff members and one which would consider the vision of the College more than the particular needs identified by individual staff members. This should be planned at institutional level and be supported by a clear budgeting exercise. (1.1)
- The College should clearly articulate and effectively communicate relevant internationalisation aims to align with strategic development plans and should duly consider risk when making decisions about further internationalisation expansions. (1.1)
- The College should perform more explicit, better targeted and more systematic benchmarking with compatible and carefully selected national and international partner institutions in order to strategically support overarching institution-wide development priorities. The benchmarking approach should be rooted in institutional needs and clearly justified by strategic drivers. (1.3)
- The College should broaden the scope of internationalisation activities and ensure that such activities relevantly support the enhancement of the quality of the study curriculum and the professionalisation skills necessary for their graduates. (1.5)
- The College should re-evaluate the number of (Erasmus+) partnerships and re-focus the approach from expanding the number of partnerships to deepening the scope of the collaboration with each partner (e.g. development of joint modules/themes, comparison and benchmarking of the curriculum) in support of study programme delivery and research actions. (1.5)
- The College should ensure more efficient use of limited resources to improve the impact and effectiveness of research outputs. (1.11)
- The College should systematically develop and coherently communicate a strategic research program to guide the approval of all research initiatives, including those generated at programme level. (1.11)

Suggestions for further improvement (list up to 10)

- With a view to the future and potential financial risks, the College may wish to further diversify its income streams to ensure sustainability, especially for the high-maintenance facilities and pedagogical equipment it currently operates. (1.2)
- The College may wish to further develop the approach to capturing and disseminating good practice to ensure the College makes systematic use of the good practice identified and is able to maintain and enhance such practices by allocating relevant resources and monitoring performance through relevant action plans. (1.3)
- Considering the Estonian national context and the limited possibilities, the College may wish to formally encourage more staff to pursue their PhDs also abroad so that they may achieve a more global and proactive perspective to allow them to more effectively discharge their educational responsibilities related to teaching, research and community services. (1.5)

- The College may consider intensified cooperation with all healthcare professional associations for better and more timely updating of specialist curricula to consistently meet societal trends and legislative requirements in the future. (1.7)
- The College may engage in intensified content and pedagogical cross fertilisation between the programs in HE and VET. (1.7)
- The College may find benefit in hiring a research (funding) coordinator/director and external, experienced scientists as RUTA members and thus giving RUTA a stronger role in guiding and approving applied research projects. (1.11)

Key to evidence

M: interviews with management staff

T: interviews with teachers and lecturers

S: evidence from interviews with students (including alumni)

E: interviews with employers and Agencies

R: inspection of resources (e.g. library visit, specialist teaching rooms)

SD: self-assessment document

1.1. Strategic management

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence and Analysis

THCC has a clear development plan, which covers all main core activities. Several aspects, which are included in the development plan (for example number of lecturers with PhD, number of visiting lecturers, satisfaction with learners with learning process, occupational therapist learning environment development) have been progressed with improvements demonstrated and monitored during the period of the plan.

The core values and mission of the College are shared by leadership, teachers, support personnel, alumni and learners (evidenced through interviews). Growing “self-confidence” of learners and professional attitude were mentioned most often in different interviews, both by students and alumni, as the most desirable graduate attributes which the College strives for. This mirrors the aspirations of the College in the form of expressed core values (M, T, E, Development Plan 2017-2021).

Overall, interviews showed a safe and creative organisational culture within the College with teachers and support personnel demonstrating relevant initiative. All interviews (alumni, managers, internship supervisors, support personnel and students) offered evidence that the core values of the College are internalized and shared. However, neither staff nor students could articulate the vision for the future of the College. This lack of understanding of a clear strategically-driven vision impacts on multiple areas where oversight and coordination is required and it influences all culture of the College and its positioning within the higher education (HE) sector in Estonia and more broadly, i.e. Europe and internationally. Even for more high-profile initiatives, like the setting up of an English-medium programme (with full delivery in English), THCC did not demonstrate that it had diligently considered motivators, strategically analysed implications, identified and possessed mechanisms of mitigating risk and determined clear objectives which could serve as measures of success for the future evaluation of this project.

The Assessment Panel noted a more reactive rather than proactive approach to overall College strategy. This is specifically observed at the level of curricula and research, where developments tend to almost exclusively follow national priorities expressed by relevant ministries with little added opportunity for the College to determine its own vision about institutional ambitions nationally, at European level and/or at international level and to anticipate, analyse and mitigate institutional risks derived from a more proactive positioning. (M, S).

During the visit, the Assessment Panel met a variety of very creative and strategically innovative staff in the College (M, T, S). However, there was not a clear demonstration as to how their ideas might be captured systematically to serve institutional purposes and strategic directions as part of a holistic plan for the College.

Service to society is well-established. Both students and faculty are involved in several health promotion activities with reported impact for the communities they target (T,E). However, these

activities too are proving to be the result of reactive approaches, with College representatives talking about their contribution to the development of society by solely responding to needs expressed without also anticipating and exploring future needs. The Assessment Panel believes that THCC is not using its full potential towards manifesting a proactive, visionary role in driving innovation for societal developments and progress. Such approach would need to be instilled through the leadership style employed and strategic priorities identified.

The Assessment Panel heard that the College encourages continuous professional development activities of individual staff members through developmental interviews and personal study plans (M, T). However, the Panel could not find evidence of sufficient strategic oversight of continuous personnel development initiatives or consistently clear alignment with overall institutional aims. Receptive responses to individual professional needs are important to ensure staff consider themselves well prepared to appropriately discharge their responsibilities, however, for the benefit of appropriate resource management (human, logistics and financial) and the success of institutional goals, continuous professional development plans should be institutionally driven with initiatives approved in light of institutional priorities. (see also details under 1.2 and 1.6)

Curriculum managers confirmed that international relationships are mostly generated and managed at curriculum level. Though there are institutional partners which the College engages with internationally, it was unclear how such partnerships were set up, what level of due diligence was applied, what institutional priorities they were specifically serving and how achievement of partnership aims was monitored. Different stakeholders found it difficult to articulate what constituted strategic internationalisation aims for the College, how/if internationalisation needs had been evaluated, recorded and transformed into strategic action, or what were concrete institutional ambitions over a given period of time (M, T, E). The lack of clarity about the strategic direction for internationalisation makes it difficult for stakeholders to engage effectively with the internationalisation agenda and runs the risk of international collaborations being retained for programme level initiatives rather than being advanced for overarching institutional benefits. Overall, the Panel found that institution-wide understanding of potential internationalisation aims relevant for VET and higher educational purposes was limited at the College and could benefit from being expanded.

There is a long term (5yearly) financial plan, smaller units can express their needs for the budget and these will be evaluated based on existing funds. However, there was lack of clarity in what regards the basis applicable for the allocation of financial and human resources between different units or programs. Senior management and course staff described a system of fluid negotiations based on needs, but there was no demonstration of a systematic, formal approach to dealing with on-going, arising needs that would serve strategic purposes and/or be aligned with strategic, overarching goals. There was also a lack of clear prioritising principles which would be applied for such allocations (M, T) and no demonstration of any risk assessment mechanisms to support decisions at strategic level.

There is an activity of benchmarking, especially for VET curricula, but also with HE and other activities with Tartu Health Care College, but no evidence was found of its systematic or strategic nature. International benchmarking is done occasionally (not as an ongoing feature of the quality assurance system) and it is limited to existing relationships and specific areas. (see Recommendation under 1.3)

The College community is fairly compact and information is exchanged constantly as part of formal or informal arrangements. There are numerous feedback systems and committees to include all stakeholders. There are also intense informal collaborations within the broader Estonian context where initiatives may take shape based on professional, out-of-college interactions. However, the

Assessment Panel is of the opinion that quality assurance mechanisms, in existence, should be more explicitly deployed to purposefully inform strategic planning with underlying proactive aims driving the design and implementation of the quality assurance system. (see Recommendation under 1.3)

Commendations

- The College is commended for the institutional approach, which aligns with the mission, to support and encourage students to find value in the work that they do and in their own capacities to engage professionally for the benefit of the wider community.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- The College should develop mechanisms to make the strategic plans, hence its vision for the future, more visible and manageable to staff and students and ensure communication of all its relevant details so that there is a clear direction of travel for all institutional stakeholders which guides operational and management decisions.
- The College should ensure initiatives impacting institutionally have consistent alignment with strategic plans, are duly scrutinised for benefits and risks and serve clear objectives with positive impact on all stakeholders (students, College, society).
- The College should develop a more strategic and proactive approach to leadership, which includes directions with operational implementation making inclusive use of risk identification and management.
- The College should strive to clearly articulate and effectively implement its role as an innovative HE institution, which has the capacity to serve society and drive it forward.
- The College should develop a more strategic, better coordinated approach to continuous professional development of staff members and one which would consider the vision of the College more than the particular needs identified by individual staff members. This should be planned at institutional level and be supported by a clear budgeting exercise.
- The College should clearly articulate and effectively communicate relevant internationalisation aims to align with strategic development plans and should duly consider risk when making decisions about further internationalisation expansions.
- See also relevant Recommendations under 1.3

1.2. Resources

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence and Analysis

THCC manages successfully two campuses: in Tallinn and in Kohtla-Järve, which both offer HE and VET delivery (SD, pg. 7-9, 46).

Physical facilities of THCC are functional and modern (R, SD pg. 27-28). The simulation centre is used for students and also for continuing education. (M, T.) Also the library is open for students, staff and the public. Sustainability is taken into account in increased use of electronic information. The library has invested in developing a comfortable environment which students appreciate and make use of regularly. (SD pg. 27, R.)

THCC is financially sustainable. The sufficient and systematic funding from state provides safety and stable circumstances. Financial budgeting is planned on an annual basis with a four-year prognosis. Financial management is strongly attached to the model of state-oriented financing. (SD, pg.23-26, M). In the near future the need for educated health care professionals, especially nurses, is clear (E), and such programmes are most likely to continue to be funded through state resources.

Still, it is worth for the future for THCC to pay careful attention to funding options for its high-maintenance technical systems and pedagogical equipment and ensure that back-up income streams allow for continued sustainability and functional operations. Responding with more clear, dedicated plans to increasing infrastructure/resource-related cost would allow for any financial risks to be accurately anticipated and mitigated. (SD 22-29, M)

The Assessment Panel was positively impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment for work and study demonstrated by management, staff and students (T,S) which constitutes robust and valuable human capacity. THCC is highly respected among employers and has a reputation of a reliable institution (E). The culture of open communication was shown to be transparent and fluent within THCC and also with employers and other external stakeholders (M, T, E, S).

The Assessment Panel found that THCC supports the health and wellbeing of employees by encouraging interventions directed towards leisure time (e.g. sport SD pg 23) and offers more possibilities for distance working (M). Whereas these options are helpful and generate more staff satisfaction with the workplace and working arrangements, it must be recognised that they do not constitute compensation for an increased, overburdening workload and cannot act as substitutes for a healthy work-life balance. In interviews, the Assessment Panel found that some staff do find themselves overburdened and ample negotiations need to take place for re-allocation of staff when extracurricular activities call for their expertise. Senior staff and teaching staff confirmed that there are instances when, as a protective measure, some initiatives proposed are not approved or lengthily postponed due to workload calculations reaching increased, unmanageable values. Some projects were described which classed as extracurricular/society-driven where specific members of staff had to be released from other duties to be able to take on project work and make use of their unique expertise. However, it was not clear for the Assessment Panel where the oversight for workload was consistently monitored, what constituted priorities for allocation, how cross-departmental resources were re-allocated, and what systematic institutional-level protection there was in place to ensure staff do not exceed normal workload parameters by taking on additional tasks out of interest.

THCC demonstrated enrolling teaching staff in systematic pedagogical professional development (M, T) which they highly valued and could make use of in classroom interactions. The number of PhDs has increased and in the future this kind of professional capacity has the potential to strengthen the human resource from the RDI perspectives. THCC has made use of visiting international professionals in a creative manner (SD Appendix 4.3 pg. 1-3, T, S). International co-operation has had a positive impact on teaching staff competences and curriculum development. (SD App. 4.3 1-3, T, S) However, the Assessment Panel noted that individual professional/educational development plans are mainly based on individual interests as expressed by employees (M, T). Whereas staff reported they were generally satisfied with this system, it was unclear to the Assessment Panel how a more strategic,

proactive approach to development of human resources was deployed and what constituted relevant criteria for selection of development proposals/initiatives. (see Recommendation in 1.1 and details under 1.6)

The Assessment Panel found that communication mechanisms (internally and externally) were well designed and applied with high levels of satisfaction amongst stakeholders. The College employs different communication channels depending on target group, including social media, media, email and their webpage which is presented in Estonian, English and Russian and contains relevant, up-to-date and easily-navigable content. Students and stakeholders reported that they were satisfied with communication they received in a timely and appropriate manner. Reputation and status in society of the institution appears well managed through the Communication Procedure which outlines requirements at institutional level.

Commendations

- College staff are commended for the enthusiastic and highly committed attitude to engage with curricular and extracurricular activities in support of students and the wider community.
- The College is commended for the modern infrastructure which positively supports educational processes, e.g. simulation centre.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- The College should better formalise the workload allocation matrix to ensure that staff are able to perform their core duties as a priority over other community-facing activities, and that workload can be more effectively monitored to avoid staff overburdening.
- See also relevant Recommendation in 1.1

Suggestions for further improvement

- With a view to the future and potential financial risks, the College may wish to further diversify its income streams to ensure sustainability, especially for the high-maintenance facilities and pedagogical equipment it currently operates.

1.3. Quality Culture

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence and Analysis

THCC has systems in place which are used to evaluate the quality of its core and support processes regularly. The Development Plan clearly outlines the targets for 2021 and the indicators as evaluated in 2017.

THCC employs an internal quality assurance system which draws on views of multiple stakeholders through questionnaires and direct interaction as part of different advisory structures. The Assessment

Panel heard that suggestions for improvement could be made by students, staff and external stakeholders (such as employers invited as advisors or internship providers) and that these were usually considered quickly and effectively. Generally, the course of communication would involve the course leader who takes feedback formally and informally through different channels. The Curriculum Council is responsible with evaluating and reporting on performance-related elements with respect to Programmes, this will include analyses of feedback received and decisions on action to be taken.

The institutional assessment process results in an annual review report which is aimed to test the achievement of the Development Plan. The College structure which considers quality issues formally is the Quality Working Group which is composed of representatives from all structural units (including the Rector's office, Student Council and Advisory Board). The Quality Working Group reports to the College Council on any aspects which are required to be discussed at College level. Annual reports are collated from quantitative and qualitative data obtained from surveys, direct feedback and advisory committees. College policy (also presented in SD, page 31) details the cycle used for assessment of quality processes across the institution. However, the Assessment Panel found it difficult to ascertain strategic-level impact for quality processes in action. Apart from the shift to competency-based education (which started more than 10 years back and has had successive rounds of analysis), THCC staff did not provide examples of strategic change/transformation prompted by the quality assurance system. Even such major planned developments like the introduction of full English-medium programmes was not described as having been based on the quality assurance system with appropriate due diligence applied and a clear strategic rationale for this upcoming development which presupposes a substantive investment in human and material resources.

The staff, students and external stakeholders reported that quality is a priority of the College and mechanisms for improvements to be considered and taken forward were deemed effective (T, E, S). However, the Assessment Panel probed the shared understanding in regards quality assurance priorities and the use of quality assurance tools to support institutional development and action planning, and found that there were inconsistencies in regards the articulation of such priorities at different management levels in the organisation and it was unclear how different quality assurance processes served the purpose for institutional development. Examples of actions taken as a result of the information captured from quality assurance processes was frequently limited to more operational issues, at course level, rather than being carried into institutional strategic planning. (see also 1.1 for more details)

THCC indicated their close collaboration with Tartu HCC and the nationally-relevant benchmarking that is achieved through this collaboration. International benchmarking activities were also reported, however the Assessment Panel could not gain clarity on what determines the benchmarking approach (which institutions are chosen, based on what criteria, and with what anticipated results), how the outcomes of these activities are used, where they impact most, how effectiveness is monitored and when necessary changes are made in terms of benchmarking arrangements. Interviews with staff and management did not clarify why benchmarking partners had been chosen and how exactly they were being used to drive development at THCC. (see also 1.1 for more details)

THCC described various (mostly informal) mechanisms of capturing and sharing good practice, however, apart from specific meetings scheduled at course level, it was unclear to the Assessment Panel how dissemination of good practice may be achieved at cross-programme, institutional level to ensure good practice could be assessed, replicated and multiplied as appropriate for wider institutional benefits. This is particularly important for action planning purposes to ensure that the College attributes appropriate resources to maintaining and further developing good practice identified.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- The College should perform more explicit, better targeted and more systematic benchmarking with compatible and carefully selected national, regional and international partner institutions in order to strategically support overarching institution-wide development priorities. The benchmarking approach should be rooted in institutional needs and clearly justified by strategic drivers.
- The College should focus more attention on achieving a more consistent understanding and application of quality assurance aims to better serve developments at institutional level and support strategic directions. This may entail a redesign of the way quality assurance mechanisms are currently being used.

Suggestions for further improvement

- The College may wish to further develop the approach to formally capturing and disseminating good practice to ensure the College makes systematic use of the good practice identified and is able to maintain and enhance such practices by allocating relevant resources and monitoring performance through relevant action plans.

1.4 Academic ethics

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence and Analysis

THCC is committed to an environment where equal treatment is guaranteed to employees and students at the College. The College applies equal treatment principles in staff recruitment and student admission processes (SD, page 32). Staff and students (M, S, T) also confirmed that they are treated with respect and dignity, and that they consider they are presented with equal opportunities within the College. Students noted that assessment procedures are fair and non-discriminatory and that they have relevant information to allow them to meet requirements of academic ethics both in classroom/internship and exam situations.

THCC has developed and adopted a Code of Academic Ethics which is implemented and monitored for appropriate application by the Ethics Committee. This is inclusive of specific regulations related to plagiarism with confirmed cases of plagiarism being recorded in a specific register. The Assessment Panel was informed that there are few cases which result in formal hearings, usually there are informally supportive mechanisms to allow staff and students to better understand and overcome any potential actions which could class as breaches.

Students are provided details of academic good practice (Guidelines “Structure and formatting of student work at Tallinn Health Care College”) and are inducted into the use of referencing systems and debate of ethical research specific to their academic fields. Guidance in following academic and ethical requirements is supplemented by staff (supervisors, course leaders) with support from the Ethics Committee, when required. The research working group RUTA also plays an important role in

promoting and upholding academic ethics. The College aligns principles applied to the Estonian Academy of Science, Estonian Research Council and Ministry of Education and Research “Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity“ joint document’s concepts of action. (SD, pag. 32).

In interviews, students were able to discuss academic research requirements which had been communicated to them. Students articulated what they were expected to do, but were not as clear on expressing the consequences of any breach of the Code of Academic Ethics and/or the Procedure for Identifying and Processing Plagiarism in Student Papers. THCC uses URKUND as the software to analyse plagiarism and it is the responsibility of the supervisor to identify and label a case of plagiarism before it is recorded in the register. The Procedure for Identifying and Processing Plagiarism in Student Papers (paragraph 7) notes the degree of violation; however, possible consequences are explicitly expressed only for serious violations.

In regards the use of library resources, the Assessment Panel heard that students were permitted to photocopy large sections of books/publications, including whole editions if insufficient loan copies were available. It was not clear to the Assessment Panel how induction for library resources covered copyright regulations and informed students of European legislation in force with protect the rights of authors. Overall, THCC needs to alert students of such aspects as well as part of application of academic ethics.

THCC has a system of complaints which staff and students can use to draw attention to situations which they believe exhibit unfair or unethical behaviour. Students reported they would initially inform their supervisors/tutors if they had any specific grievance of address the curriculum coordinator. (S) The Assessment Panel heard in meetings that usually informal action will resolve the complaint with very few complaints having been presented formally. However, if a formal complaint were needed this would eventually have final decision by the Vice-Rector. (M)

Areas of concern and recommendations

- The College should further develop and better communicate the Code of Academic Ethics and related procedures to ensure clear and explicit consequences are defined so that students and staff achieve a consistent understanding of how plagiarism is dealt with.

Suggestions for further improvement

- The College may wish to include in formal communication to students aspects related to copyright and photocopying restrictions to ensure students are aware of regulations in force and display recommended behaviour.

1.5 Internationalisation

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence and Analysis

The College has developed and established an Internationalisation strategy (Tallinn HCC Internationalisation strategy 2019-2021). This document defines objectives, activities and intended outcomes, related to internationalisation. Also indicators are clearly set.

The College is - through staff mobility - active in a wide range of international networks and consortia. Sufficient Erasmus+ partnerships have been established. Overall, students have sufficient access to international resources. The library offers a good range of international books, journal and access to e-books (SD pg 27, 34-37).

Although the internationalisation strategy is clearly outlined, the Assessment Panel found that this strategy is too narrow and limited in focus insufficiently allowing the College to think strategically in terms of its role in international activities and/or collaborations (M, T, S, E). The staff and student mobility (incoming and outgoing) are well elaborated and the College confirmed that these are seen as the core objective and activity of internationalisation. The Assessment Panel concluded that a link between potential internationalisation activities and the quality of the study programs in general is insufficiently explored and there is no explicit action which would ensure that internationalisation activities are determined by and relevantly contribute to the quality of the study programmes and the overall student experience in the College. Furthermore, internationalisation activities should be tailored more towards enhancing professional competences and career progression especially in such areas where Estonia offers limited university study possibilities. All graduates, in every program, should be trained as 21st century world-citizens, where active knowledge of the profession (including from an international dimension) is integrated in their performance. Internationalisation can - and should be – linked to the development of skills like creativity, leadership, international communication, flexibility, independency and self-management etc. This linkage is insufficiently visible in the programs and insufficiently recognisable in the mind-set of staff members. (See also relevant Recommendation in 1.7)

With internationalisation primarily focusing on activities abroad, the group of staff and students who are not able to travel abroad or get in close contact with incoming staff or students, will be underserved and will lack the opportunity to develop a strong understanding of international dimensions for the professions they represent. Reports by staff and students in interviews presented a mixed picture of the opportunities they make use of at home to try and enhance their international understanding and the effectiveness of such activities in compensating for internationalisation-abroad-type interactions. As such, the Assessment Panel is of the strong opinion that internationalisation-at-home deserves more attention and is currently insufficiently explored to better serve the educational aims of all staff and students. The self-assessment report and the interviews with staff and students demonstrated limited attention given to relevant topics like intercultural competencies, professional awareness at global level, on-line international collaboration

and development. Such topics would benefit from being frontlined across a number of activities, rather than concentrated in individual units.

The annual numbers of incoming and outgoing students are not at the targeted level, though not substantially below. The Assessment Panel notes that the majority of students, who for personal reasons (job, children, family) cannot go abroad, are not exposed enough or involved in an international orientation which would highlight such topics as the ones listed above and give these students a much broader perspective for their future professional careers.

Incoming students are warmly welcomed: a special designed introduction program is offered to every incoming student, including a language and cultural introduction. During their exchange program, the visiting students are guided by supervisors. The number of incoming student is relatively high – too high to give every international applicant a placement.

The Assessment Panel scrutinised the quantity and quality of international partnerships (mainly Erasmus +) and found that there was no formally articulated strategic approach to setting up partnerships that would align and offer clear development opportunities for staff and student exchanges on content which would be relevant and could support the learning outcomes of various programmes offered or the research initiatives/projects undertaken by the College.

The Assessment Panel probed the link between developing English-medium programmes and internationalisation aims, and found that predominantly the initiative of setting up the Assistant Pharmacy programme delivered in English was prompted more by the national Estonian labour market characteristics (i.e. usefulness of Assistant Pharmacists to be capable of engaging with customers in English) than any internationalisation ambitions. In interviews, College staff were not consistent in articulating the profile of prospective students being targeted (e.g. Estonian, Russian, European, Asian etc) or the actions expected on graduation (i.e. foreign students to stay in Estonia or return home, Estonian students to work nationally or abroad) and, as such, the Assessment Panel could not gain a clear understanding as to how the internationalisation agenda (as currently set out) may serve this specific development.

Commendations

- The College is commended for the participation achieved in a range of (international) networks and consortia.
- The College is commended for its library resources which offer access to a wide range of international materials (books, E-books, journals, etc.)
- The College is commended for offering a solid introduction and guidance program to incoming students.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- The College should further develop its internationalisation policy and make relevant adjustments to ensure alignment with the strategic management of the College.
- The College should broaden the scope of internationalisation activities and ensure that such activities relevantly support the enhancement of the quality of the study curriculum and the professionalisation skills necessary for their graduates.
- The College should further elaborate internationalisation-at-home engagements ensuring that even staff and students who are not able to travel develop an international mindset.

- The College should ensure that there are effective communication channels for the dissemination of values and objectives set out in the Internationalisation Strategy to enhance the understanding and proactive application of an internationalisation vision by all staff members.
- The College should re-evaluate the number of (Erasmus+) partnerships and re-focus the approach from expanding the number of partnerships to deepening the scope of the collaboration with each partner (e.g. development of joint modules/themes, comparison and benchmarking of the curriculum) in support of study programme delivery and research actions.
- The College should aim to embed initiatives with internationalisation implications (such as setting up of English-medium programmes) into the internationalisation strategy and perform a more thorough identification of impact, risk and anticipated objectives before initiatives are formally launched.
- See relevant Recommendation in 1.7

Suggestions for further improvement

- Considering the Estonian national context and the limited possibilities, the College may wish to formally encourage more staff to pursue their PhDs also abroad so that they may achieve a more global and proactive perspective to allow them to more effectively discharge their educational responsibilities related to teaching, research and community services.

1.6 Teaching staff

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence and Analysis

Evidence in the self-assessment document demonstrates that there is sufficient number of teaching staff across all curricula. There are several faculty members with “double workplace”, who work both in their professional context (for example in the hospital) and in the College. This enables teachers to build a strong connection between the world of work and study environment and bring in current, novel knowledge and skills. The curricula leaders are highly motivated to develop their area of work and to support staff and students to improve within their programmes. At the course level, management demonstrated a systematic approach with appropriate quality assurance mechanisms being applied to ensure performance was monitored and feedback actioned in a timely manner. The Assessment Panel found that even though not all work of staff is clearly regulated and there is insufficiently effective oversight of workload monitoring at institutional level, the middle level managers help faculty members to balance their workload, and limit it where necessary or try to renegotiate it with other departments. This is mainly done through performance/development discussions, which are held annually, but may also happen on a case-by-case basis if unplanned initiatives need to be deployed within strict timescales (e.g. responding to Ministerial requests) (T, CL). (see also 1.2 and Recommendation in 1.1)

There is a systematic approach to teacher training, especially for new teachers. Support may be in the form of: mentors, in-college training, support for learning educational skills at the University of Tallinn or Tartu, participation in short training courses according to the needs identified by staff members.

The mentoring system of new employers is systematic and accessible. Several teachers explained in the interviews how they had used it and how it had helped them. The self-assessment document showed that since 2015, 13 staff members had passed the system.

The Assessment Panel found clear signs of systematic development of teaching skills for staff members. Both in HE and VET program the teachers are encouraged to take a course of teaching skills either in Tallinn or Tartu University (M, T). Several VET teachers mentioned that they had received or were applying for master's degree in teaching in VET.

Additionally, the Assessment Panel recognised the steady growth of faculty members with PhDs compared to previous accreditation visits, and the number of PhD candidates. The possibility of taking a free semester helps staff members even more to concentrate on their professional development. However, specifically for some of the programmes being delivered (Midwife, Assistant Pharmacist) the College should continue to encourage more staff to enrol in PhD programmes.

The Assessment Panel was not presented with a clear strategy for staff training/development which would have covered a number of years ahead. The annual performance reviews for staff allows individual learning and training needs of teachers to be identified and collected, but there is no college-wide strategy of next steps for improvement of staff performance which would be driven by the overarching strategic vision of College.

Teaching staff mentioned relevant help they get from support personnel, including curricula managers and IT specialists. During the interviews, the Assessment Panel was presented with examples of using joint teaching, especially in the context of simulations. Research of staff members is supported also by the RUTA (research support) group.

Internship supervisors are offered regular training. However, managers of VET mentioned that it is not always easy for internship supervisors to leave their job and take part in such trainings. But the College is constantly looking for flexible and attractive solutions to engage employers and internship providers more. An example was provided of compensating employees who act as supervisors through continuous professional development training by the College in areas identified of interest, given that such supervisors are not otherwise remunerated. (E).

The Assessment Panel found the cooperation between academic staff and support personnel to be effective. For example VET teachers reported in interview that they plan modules together with each other and with curriculum leaders. (T)

According to the self-assessment document, the number of visiting lecturers has grown during last years, which is a benefit to staff and students alike.

The College allows for an innovative and creative learning environment that is constantly developed by staff input. This generates multiple areas of good practice which should benefit from a quality assurance mechanism that would allow for more systematic capturing and dissemination of such practices for the benefit of cross-programme, institution-wide initiatives. (see Suggestion under 1.3)

Students (both in VET and HE) were satisfied with their study process and the ways they were taught. The high employment level of alumni also confirmed that the quality of learning and teaching, the College offers is good and compatible with professional requirements on the market.

Teachers, students and employers referred to the regular feedback system and how the courses are developed based on feedback. However, the Assessment Panel found that the approach taken by the College would be best described as reactive rather than proactive. (M, T) (see Recommendations under 1.1. and 1.3)

Commendations

- The Teaching Staff are commended for the close academic and pastoral relationship with students, specifically for the individual support offered which students highly value.
- The College is commended for the effective mentoring system of new staff members which is systematic and accessible.
- The College is commended for the training offered and collaboration with internship supervisors which ensure effective alignment between internship activities and specific programme learning outcomes.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- See relevant Recommendations in 1.1 and 1.3

Suggestions for further improvement

- The College may further benefit from encouraging all teaching staff to enrol in PhD programmes to ensure a sufficient amount and more strategic approach to research, development and creative activity.
- See also relevant Suggestion under 1.3

1.7 Study programme

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence and Analysis

All the study programmes are designed and developed while taking into account the expectations of stakeholders. Graduates are well equipped for their professions and start their career with self-confidence. (see Commendation under 1.1) This is confirmed by a representative group of employers and by several representatives of national organisations (Nursing Union, Estonian Qualifications Authority and several members of the advisory board of the College).

The Assessment Panel noted that the content of the study programmes is, generally, in line with the expectations of the society and validation is ongoing. Furthermore, in the study programmes where European Parliament and Council has given its’ regulations to curriculum (eg. Midwifery), the regulations have been taken into consideration (SD App 4.3 pg 1-10 and Curriculum of Midwife, T, S). Tight collaborations and effective involvement of various professional bodies as part of programme development were also noted. However, it was apparent that the large number and breadth of professional associations in healthcare is proving somewhat of a challenge for the College to keep in contact with and have latest information about the finer details in particular fields. When needed,

curriculum changes are developed and implemented to make sure that the curricula are updated according to the higher education and professional standards and trends in the relevant fields; however changes are not always as timely as they could be. One such example is represented by recent changes in law with more responsibilities being placed onto nurses in detecting out-hospital patient' death, including the reason of the death. Forensic medicine is not added yet in the nurse curricula.

The Programmes are designed to contain the legally necessary ECTS. However, their distribution by compulsory and elective courses requires more consideration as it is insufficiently balanced and does not allow for a level of variety of content which could be beneficial to students in exploring career paths. Currently, the programmes under review exhibit 5 ECTS of electives and the Assessment Panel believes electives could be made more use of and allow for a stronger steer towards specific career components and skills.

Although the objectives of study programmes, modules and courses and their planned learning outcomes are specific and coherent, the Assessment Panel found that there was insufficient clarity and visibility regarding 21st century skills (e.g. critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, interprofessional and intercultural communication, flexibility, entrepreneurship). These skills deserve more prominence in all curricula and require monitoring regarding the students' development during the program. The use of a student portfolio with room for formative assessment, peer assessment and self-assessment, could effectively support this process. The Health Promotion program serves as a positive example within the College regarding these aspects.

The theoretical learning and practical learning (internships) are well interconnected. The students as well as the alumni reported that the relationship between the in-school learning part and learning in practice is clear and are mutually supportive of the achievement of the learning outcomes. The objectives for the practical modules are clearly set and relevant. Practical supervisors are well informed about the content, objectives and criteria of the internship. Generally, the internship opportunities are well fitting to the general objectives of the programs and sufficient in number. The supervisors are well informed about the content and objectives of the learning program and the students' personal objectives, with training of supervisors also being conducted in the College. (see also 1.6)

Students and alumni speak in positive terms about the programs. Students report they are strongly supported and guided and the responsibility for their own learning process was convincingly presented to the Assessment Panel. The individual support provided by their lecturers was spoken of in highly positive terms.

The assessment- and student guidance programs are in accordance with the learning outcomes. Outcome based and formative assessment methods are used and more and more integrated. The lecturers have acquired their required competencies.

More specifically, the curriculum of Health Promotion is relatively new and has been assessed by the Panel more closely. The aim of the curriculum of Health Promotion is to provide internationally recognised quality higher education for working in the field of Public Health. This is the only educational program in Estonia in health promotion. The re-development of this program has only recently finalised and for this process the learning objectives are re-formulated, in line with international profiles (based on the guidelines of the International Union for Health Promotion and Education). The staff of the health promotion team is (to a high extend) renewed and well trained in specific content areas and in didactical methodologies.

However, the proposal for the English-medium program for Pharmacy Assistants to be launched in 2020 is still in need of multiple clarifications and exhibits a variety of risks. The Assessment Panel could not gain a robust sense of vision in regards this programme. Senior management and staff could not convincingly articulate the strategic aims driving this initiative. It was difficult to establish who the target group was, what needs (whether local, national or international) the programme was meant to address and how staffing with appropriate levels of English language competence would be ensured to allow for a positive teaching and learning experience for students. The programme proposals was not tested for risks and none of the more obvious risks (low student numbers, strained resources, adapted classroom pedagogies for multicultural/multilingual classrooms etc) were presented to the Assessment Panel as having been considered and addressed. The Assessment Panel could not clearly understand how this proposal serves the College's mission and its internationalisation agenda, i.e. what were the benefits that the College was hoping to achieve. Overall, the Assessment Panel found that the weak articulation of strategic purpose, the limited resources at the College, the lack of clarity around size and profile of possible cohort, the difficulties regarding internship delivery etc would determine the effort to outweigh any immediate benefits. The Assessment Panel believes more planning and development is necessary before risks are addressed and/or eliminated. (see also 1.1 and 1.5)

In the cooperation between the VET and the HE programmes, the Assessment Panel was presented with limited signs of effective crossovers. There are, however, opportunities that could be explored in terms of didactical approaches, programme content development and staff interactions. Currently, only few staff members seem to be involved consistently with both types of programmes.

Commendations

- The College is commended for the robust alignment of its programmes with society needs.
- The College is commended for ensuring a clear and meaningful interlink between theory and practice in the design and delivery of the programmes.
- The College is commended for the effective organisation and meaningful delivery of internships which allow students to gage the working environment and better achieve learning outcomes.
- See also relevant Commendation under 1.1

Areas of concern and recommendations

- The College should increase the volume and variety of elective subjects specific for the Programmes it offers, in both HE and VET to further support the development of specialised graduate competences and employment driven attributes.
- The College should provide more clarity and visibility in the formulation of objectives regarding 21st century skills (e.g. critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, interprofessional and intercultural communication, flexibility, entrepreneurship) as part of the content of study programs. Electives can also play a role in better focusing towards modern working skills expected of graduates.
- The College should re-evaluate its initiative regarding the English-medium programme for Assistant pharmacists and clearly articulate the target group, the anticipated outcomes and the strategic goals which underpin this development before formally launching the programme. Better-targeted awareness of risk factors impacting future students is also paramount and solutions should be sought to ensure risk is appropriately mitigated.

Suggestions for further improvement

- The College may consider intensified cooperation with all healthcare professional associations for better and more timely updating of specialist curricula to consistently meet societal trends and legislative requirements in the future.
- The College may engage in intensified content and pedagogical cross fertilisation between the programs in HE and VET.

1.8 Learning and teaching

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence and Analysis

THCC admission regulations are based on the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act and Tallinn Health Care College's Statutes. (College homepage) The College provides admission-themed web counselling and identifies candidates who require additional Estonian language studies. Admission criteria are described in Admission Regulation Appendix. (College homepage) Candidates perform the admission test electronically. Internal electronic admission system GRETE and a national admission system SAIS are used in the admission process. Admission takes place during different admission periods around the year. Candidates' readiness to begin studies is assessed. (SD pg. 46)

The College supports students with special needs both during the admission and learning process. Relevant information is available on the College website. For example, there is the possibility to get extra time to do the test; a homepage adapted to the visually impaired; accessibility of learning environment, admission interviews over Skype (SD pg. 47).

Teaching and learning objectives are described in the Development Plan 2017-2021. Modern teaching methods and technologies are used in the teaching process. For example, the college has a well-equipped simulation centre and other well-equipped study rooms; different e-learning courses are provided; the course of anatomy and physiology as a whole is in e-learning; e-learning is supported by teachers' consultations and video lectures. (SD report pg. 49) Students appreciate the Moodle environment, which they say enables storage of materials, comment on the written work of others, and testing of knowledge (S). Moodle is actively used for communication and follow-up also during the internships (E).

The Assessment Panel was presented with a well-functioning system of work practice for HE and VET programmes: placements are carefully assessed and aligned with the study objectives; students and supervisors are well informed; roles and responsibilities are well-clarified (S, E). Up to now, the College has managed to find annually enough student practical placements that meet the required criteria. Students are well aware of the requirements of the practical training base. Students noted the opportunity to influence in which place they can take up the internship (S). The content of the internship is precisely adjusted to the content of the curriculum which is actively monitored by the internships' supervisors. In general, knowledge and practical skills are well aligned (E). (see Commendations under 1.6 and 1.7)

During the workpractice/internship, formal evaluation is mainly achieved between the student, the supervisor and the responsible teacher at the College. Some students organise their own informal communication tool through social media (Students from Health promotion reported so). To give more room for peer-evaluation and to promote “learning from each other”, the College could consider strengthening peer-evaluation or monitoring system e.g. by teacher-led return sessions at the College or on-line discussions in small student groups during the practicals.

Students are motivated to learn and contribute to improving the quality of their studies by providing meaningful feedback. Students’ assessment to being learning-centred raised in last five years (SD pg. 49); satisfaction with organisation of studies has been stable. (SD pg. 50) Students belong to different councils like the Curriculum Council, College Council and working groups like the quality working group. Students are included in shaping a learner-focused environment. Based on students’ recommendations necessary improvements in the work environment were made. (SD pg. 49)

In general, the teaching and learning strategies and facilities are student-centred. The staff demonstrate commitment to the study progress of the students and the students confirm that the College systematically supports them, on personal as well as on study content level.

According to the employers’ and alumni satisfaction surveys, the graduates have competitive professional knowledge and skills. (SD pg. 49)

Commendations

- The College is commended for the wide variety of teaching methods and technologies used in the teaching process, including relevant simulations.
- See also relevant Commendations in 1.6 and 1.7

Suggestions for further improvement

- The College may wish to consider further enhancing the quality of the practical trainings/internships by strengthening peer-monitoring and evaluation system, where students inform each other about the progress, problems and questions they have during their practical training.

1.9 Student assessment

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence and Analysis

Assessment rules and principles at the College are set in the Study Regulation and correspond to the Ministry of Education and Research's regulation. Relevant information is available to students in the study information system (SIS). The learning environment allows for a variety of assessment methods (visit to the study rooms, SD pg. 52).

Students confirmed that they find assessment methods to be designed in a way that allows them to demonstrate the level of achievement of learning outcomes. Students noted that they receive clear information at the beginning of the course about assessment requirements and what they can expect.

Several of the assessment methods are practical in nature, according to the character of the curricula. Final theses and other form of research done by students are presented and discussed between students. After completing the internship assessment, students share their experiences with each other, which makes the assessment even more valuable.

Assessments are set and marked by the lecturer(s). The Assessment Panel was not informed whether written exam papers are anonymised and/or if second marking or random sampling is used for moderation purposes. This would contribute to the reliability and objectivity of assessment results.

The College organises regular trainings to support development of lecturers' and internship supervisors' assessment competencies. (SD pg. 52) Feedback given by students allows lecturers to improve their assessment methods and system for giving feedback to students during the study process (SD pg. 40). Students are aware of what is being evaluated in a subject and how the grade is formed (learning outcomes in SIS). Knowledge of final paper and final exam assessment criteria are assessed (SD pg. 53). Students know about the possibility to appeal grades and the procedure for resolving disputes. Students' rights and obligations are defined in the Study Regulation (SD pg. 53).

Internship feedback is usually provided at the end of the internship period. Feedback on manual skills is provided most often during the internship (S).

Recognition of prior learning and work experience (RPL) is regulated by a corresponding procedure at the College. Students' satisfaction with RPL is assessed. (SD pg. 53). However, the Assessment Panel found the procedure for recognition of prior learning and work experience unclear (VET S) and insufficiently standardised to allow for consistent evaluations to be conducted.

Assessment of modules in VET is often fragmented. It follows the logic of content-, not learning outcome-based logic, as the learning outcomes have not been assessed holistically (M, T). The Panel recognises that this problem exists in many Estonian vocational schools and is partly due to wrongly formatted e-environment. However, this is something, which needs to be changed in close years to make the study truly holistic and outcome-based. The separation of one module into different themes

taught by different teachers makes a more holistic assessment more challenging for staff to organise; however, the Panel believes that in support of the outcome-based approach of curricula, it would be important to aim towards unifying assessment components by modules and even more broadly. Where valid, HE would also greatly benefit from this approach.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- The College should consider instituting, for all assessment modes, a system for moderation of assessment results (e.g. second marking, random sampling, external examining etc) to increase reliability and objectivity of assessment results.

Suggestions for further improvement

- The College may wish to consider further standardising the procedure for Recognition of Prior Learning.
- The College should aim to achieve a system of holistic assessment of modules in the future, which does not fragment learning outcomes into different parts of module and assessment methods.

1.10 Learning support systems

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence and Analysis

The Assessment Panel found that the College has a well-developed learning support system (SD, T, S). The College offers different support services including psychological counselling, study counselling, career counselling and tutoring (SD, M, S). Information regarding support systems is distributed in introductory classes in the first year of studies, on the institution's website and through SIS (SD). Counselling is provided in all units across Estonia, it is also possible to organise a session over Skype. Support is provided for a variety of problems including mental health problems, financial problems, problems regarding studies etc and the student can be referred to a specialist if necessary. Students are aware of the possibilities and who to turn to when they are experiencing problems (S, M, T). However, it was not clear to the Assessment Panel from interview responses how to ascertain the formal role a teacher would have in the process of identifying students in need of support if these did not themselves approach support services or otherwise come forward to teachers for support. THCC monitors students' satisfaction with the counselling services (SD, S, T). Overall, students are pleased with the support system according to the feedback gathered by THCC (SD). Career counselling services are offered in cooperation with Eesti Töötukassa (SD, M).

THCC has a system for supporting and advising students, including assigning a tutor to help them adjust (SD). Tutors, that are students who have completed a course on tutoring (ECTS-awarded), are an important part of the learning support systems offered in THCC. Tutors help students adjust, provide basic information and if necessary, refer them to a specialist. (SD,S). The student tutoring

system is appreciated and the Assessment Panel heard of multiple positive experiences, however, apart from informal knowledge of what would happen if the situation they were confronted with was more difficult and how they would be able to identify elements to alert them to a difficult situation, there is no written guidance offered by THCC in support of such situations.

Prospective students with special needs are offered counselling before studies also to help them make an informed choice (SD). However, there is no full overview of the number of students with special needs since it is not mandatory to inform the school about disabilities on admission (SD). THCC offers a possibility to put together an individual study plan in reasoned cases (SD, M, T) and students reported being aware of this (S). THCC collects and analyses data on support services and referrals to specialists, including the number of cases and the nature of the problems students need counselling with (SD).

The goal of THCC is to keep the number of drop-outs below 7%. The highest share of drop-outs is in vocational education. The College analyses the reasons for choosing to withdraw from studies. (SD, M). The admission process is also designed to help reduce potential drop-outs, and this was confirmed in interviews. During the studies the progress of students is monitored by the College, problematic students are contacted and offered help.

THCC has a procedure for handling complaints, staff and students are aware of the possibility to file a complaint if needed (interviews). Information about the organisation of internship and help with practical placements are offered by the College (SD). THCC offers technical assistance regarding E-learning activities and simulation studies.

The library offers a place for students to rest and the possibility to acquire the books that students need. (R) Books are generally available in sufficient numbers, however, the library staff also confirmed that students were allowed to photocopy large sections of books or the whole book, as necessary. (see Suggestion in 1.4)

Commendations

- The College is commended for the consistent and sufficient support offered across all study locations.
- The College is commended for the important and beneficial role student tutors hold in the support systems offered by the College.

Suggestions for further improvement

- The College may benefit from further clarifying the formal role of teachers in initial counselling phases.
- The College may wish to offer student tutors more comprehensive formal guidance, e.g. written guidelines, for dealing with issues arising in a more consistent, timely and appropriate manner.
- See also relevant Suggestion in 1.4

1.11 Research, development and/or other creative activity

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Evidence and Analysis

The Self-assessment Document of the College demonstrates the RDC activities which take place at the College. An applied research and research and development working group RUTA was established to coordinate RDC activities (SD page 60). RUTA organises trainings, research work competitions, advices in applied research and publication of research articles. In addition, THCC and structural units' development plans outline targeted RDC activities. Every programme has research directions guiding the approval of research initiatives (SD page 62). The number of approved research areas varies from one (Assistant Pharmacist) to four by Curriculum. The Curricula research areas are approved by the College Council (SD page 60). RDC funding is driven by the RDC funding strategy, which guarantees and supports RDC initiation, conducting, publication and promotion. The approach taken is bottom-up with many applied research initiatives being proposed/guided by senior lecturers and subsequently funding approved by the Rector. (SD the list of projects, Appendix 3, T, PM)

The number of members of staff holding PhD degrees and capable of leading the RDC (excluding Midwifery Programme) (SD page 62, T) and the number of publications are both on a rising trend (SD page 61 Table 35). The international impact in RDC activities is still rather modest and the College recognises here an opportunity for improvement (SD page 60). Staff involved in RDC demonstrated strong engagement and motivation. RDC output is acknowledged in staff's performance discussions (SD page 62). There is a possibility for the teachers to get some 'dedicated time' for RDC activities and there is even some funding allocated for this purpose in the College budget. Analysis of the curricula shows a good integration of professional content and RDC and the students can actively take part in applied research and projects (SD page 63, T).

However, the Assessment Panel was not presented with an overarching College-level research strategy, visibly manifested at programme level. As such it was observed that research projects are generated through individual proposals/interest and frequently serve a capacity building exercise for in-house development. Research topics are thus insufficiently coordinated and were not demonstrated to directly align with College-level strategic objectives.

RDC activities can often manifest as short-term projects which require funding. Such initiatives would greatly benefit from a coherent, College-level research strategy to guide proposals and approval processes.

Senior management confirmed an agreement with Tallinn University to increase the volume of research. The Assessment Panel view this as a positive development, however, more intensified national, Nordic and international collaborators in RDC are needed to raise the level and volume of RDC and ensure relevant impact is achieved.

Commendations

- The College is commended for giving students active roles in applied research and projects.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- The College should ensure more efficient use of limited resources to improve the impact and effectiveness of research outputs.
- The College should systematically develop and coherently communicate a strategic research program to guide the approval of all research initiatives, including those generated at programme level.
- The College should consider simplifying the research initiative approval protocol and focussing the role of RUTA in guiding and directing research and development initiatives.

Suggestions for further improvement

- The College may wish to make more use of research findings as part of the teaching processes to ensure HE students have access to direct research debates through lecturers who also conduct research projects.
- The College may find benefit in hiring a research (funding) coordinator/director and external, experienced scientists as RUTA members and thus giving RUTA a stronger role in guiding and approving applied research projects.

1.12 Service to society

conforms to requirements	partially conforms to requirements	does not conform to requirements	worthy of recognition
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Evidence and Analysis

The College initiates and implements development activities, which enhance the health and well-being of the community having a strong impact on community members. Teaching staff confirmed that the College is an acknowledged organiser of lifelong learning programmes for all over Estonia both financed from ESF or by participants (T). An example of this is the resuscitation and first aid project “Your hands can save a life” which was delivered to more than 3000 people. Also approximately 6000 people in kindergarten and schools were educated by College students about flu prophylaxis.

The College offers virtual consultation and counselling on its homepage –there is a pop-up on the homepage, through which it is possible to send questions to pharmacist about medicines, herbs, food supplements etc (SD pg 65). College assistant pharmacist curriculum teachers answer them.

As a competence centre, the College cooperates with professional associations. The interview with management staff confirmed cooperation with Nurses Association and Care Work Society. Other professional associations are considered for collaboration and discussions of development.

The College specialist library is open to all those interested, also library organises different virtual exhibitions.

The College makes its facilities available for free for health sector events like blood establishment donor days.

The College has an annual Open Day fair with employers and cooperation partners and health related conferences.

Refresher trainings are organised and the Lifelong Learning specialists informed the Assessment Panel that the refresher trainings are for both students and specialists. The number of participants in refresher trainings has remained stable throughout the years: 1208 in year 2016; 1061 in year 2017 and 1582 in year 2018 (SD pg 67)VET alumni reported that more refresher trainings could be useful for VET specialities as currently what was on offer was deemed insufficient.(S)

Alumni are involved in College development activities as part of curriculum and student councils. 53,8% of College employees are College alumni, so the College also acts as an employer.(SD pg 66)

In cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs College, the College carried out the project “Nurses back to healthcare” for nurses not working in nursing sector to reduce the deficit of nurses in healthcare.(SD pg 68)

Commendations

- The College is commended for the wide-ranging, impactful activities it organises in support of Estonian society.
- The College is commended for the involvement of students in society-facing health promotion actions which makes the College visible in society and enhances its reputation and status.
- The College is commended for the newly renovated and modern environment, the professional simulation centre and the good opportunities offered (frequently for free) not only to students and teachers but also to partners, alumni and the public.

Suggestions for further improvement

- The College may wish to consider contributing more refresher trainings specifically for VET alumni.

2. Assessment findings of the sample of the study programmes in higher education

Study programme	Level	Academic unit responsible for the study programme
Midwife	Professional Higher Education	Health Education Centre
Assistant Pharmacist	Professional Higher Education	Medical Technology Education Centre
Health Promotion	Professional Higher Education	Health Education Centre

The findings reported under the institutional section above also hold true for the Programmes under review. Where there were no elements of direct specificity regarding an individual programme, the Assessment Panel chose not to repeat the Commendations, Recommendations or Suggestions.

2.1 Study programme of Midwife

General information

The Curriculum of Midwife is the longest programme offered in THCC with a nominal duration of studies of 4.5 years. The study programme consists of 270 ECTS and the graduates acquire a double qualification as a nurse and as a midwife. There is a very long history of educating midwives in THCC. Previously the midwives' role in hospital has been the main focus but in the upcoming future THCC aspires to focus more on the role of midwives in primary health care centres to ensure reproductive health in community, including postpartum home visits and conducting screenings. Midwifery students are involved in services for society as they conduct health education lectures, workshops and activities directed at the public, which are good examples of an authentic and effective learning environment (SD Appendix 4.3, T, E, S.) THCC meets the qualitative and quantitative needs of employers and society (E), with the Midwife curriculum having been also developed through international collaborative networks (SD Appendix 4.3, T).

2.1.1 Planning and management of studies

Evidence and Analysis

Planning and management of Midwife studies is subject to the same centralised processes as other programmes (see detailed description at institutional level). The curriculum of Midwifery is based logically on the principle of health and illness (SD Appendix 4.3, 4.3 a, T). There is also an opportunity to choose 5 ECTS elective studies such as "Project -Based Practical Training" and "Art and Science in

Health Care". These kinds of studies are good examples of promoting students' general skills, such as creativity, entrepreneurship and critical thinking. However, the Assessment Panel found that the amount of elective studies could be increased. In the case of curriculum of Midwifery when the extent of studies is 270 ECTS the increasing of elective studies would prove reasonable to ensure students' individual professional growth. (see Recommendation in 1.7)

The study programme also follows the required EU-directives (SD, M, T). Midwifery students fill a record book during their clinical practice/internship to ensure a sufficient number of patients from different specified fields are involved in their training as required by EU-directives (S). Clinical practice periods cover required fields: normal and pathological pregnancy, normal and pathological delivery, puerperium, gynaecological diseases, neonatology and primary health care. Furthermore EU-directives prescribe that every midwifery student must take care of 100 pregnant women, 100 healthy newborns, 20 newborns with health problems, 100 postnatal women, 40 women in labour (in the second stage), prove their knowledge and skills in breastfeeding counselling and also treat gynaecological patients before graduation. Because of the close co-operation with hospitals these requirements are achieved at THCC without any impediments (S, E). THCC gathers feedback from students and stakeholders to develop the curriculum. THCC has previously reacted to feedback remarkably quickly. (T, E, S.) During interviews, midwifery students highlighted the types of competences they have achieved during their studies. These include: good capacity for working life, preparedness for critical situations and also good teamwork and co-operation skills (S).

Since the graduates of midwifery curriculum acquire a double qualification and can work either as a midwife or as a nurse, THCC has acknowledged the need for closer co-operation between midwifery and nursing students, which is reasonable from the resources and expertise point of view. Surgical, internal and mental health nursing belong to both curriculum and competences to be achieved. (SD, T). The double qualification is ensured with the sufficient extent of theoretical studies and practical training periods (SD Appendix 4.3 a). For better transparency it would be beneficial that the nursing part and midwifery part could be seen also more separately in the curriculum. This might be useful in some cases if the student wants to graduate only as a nurse – it could prove helpful to enable a better understanding of when this might be possible and what needs to be achieved for graduation as a sole qualification.

Commendations

- The Programme is commended for the modern learning facilities and the multiprofessional use of the simulation centre as a learning tool to develop teamwork abilities and closer co-operation between different specialities.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- See relevant Recommendation in 1.7

Suggestions for further improvement

- The College should ensure the transparency of double qualification components by clearly stating the volume of theoretical and practical training separately in each subject, including clarifications about ECTS allocated for midwifery and nursing, respectively. This would also allow for an easier analysis of conformity to EU directives.

2.1.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

Evidence and Analysis

The Assessment Panel finds the open atmosphere and communication culture among the staff, students and employers noteworthy. As with other programmes, the learning environment, the resources available are well appreciated by students and staff (see also Commendation in 1.2).

THCC focuses on student-centred learning and teaching approaches, clearly demonstrable in the Midwifery programme, as well. Teaching staff are knowledgeable and well qualified, however, the Assessment Panel noted that more so than in other programmes for Midwifery the number of PhD holders was particularly low. The Panel did consider that the PhD in Midwifery held by one of the staff members is particularly valuable in the context of Estonia as it constitutes pioneering research for this particular field or study.

Centralised study support systems are proving beneficial for all students. THCC has created a tutoring system which relies on peer support and is highly valued among students. (T, S).

Similar to other programmes, the Midwifery students also highlighted that they have a close relationship with the teachers who are responsive to their needs and support their performance (see also Commendation in 1.6). They feel that they are treated with equal amount of attention.

Midwifery students were pleased with the variety and amount of assessment methods they have had during the studies and the evaluation supported their professional growth (S.) The possibility of E-learning is alternated with theoretical and practical periods (SD, S).

Academic staff, students and employers are overall satisfied with the situation and competences acquired during the studies (M, T, S, E). Collaboration with institutions for the purpose of driving the curriculum forward appears stronger in Midwifery than other programmes scrutinised by the Assessment Panel.

Commendations

- The Programme is commended for the breadth of multiprofessional and international networks being used to support the development of innovative, modern learning and teaching methods.
- See relevant Commendations in 1.2 and 1.6

Suggestions for further improvement

- The College may benefit from encouraging more Midwifery teaching staff to enrol in PhD programmes to ensure a sufficient amount and more strategic approach to research, development and creative activities that would serve this Programme directly.

2.1.3 Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

Evidence and Analysis

International co-operation exists and both teachers and students have used opportunities to visit other institutions, mostly through Erasmus programme. Joint courses with foreign universities have been organised, for example a breastfeeding course with Metropolia University in Helsinki, Finland (SD, S). In addition there already existed practice like benchmarking with the benefit of MIMO-network and there have been changes into curriculum because of the international co-operation (SD). The other example of internationalisation is Afghanistan project where both teachers and students have been involved. The project proposes training Afghan midwives in cooperation with NGO Mondo, with focus on culture-competent midwifery.

Similar to other programmes, Midwifery would benefit from more strategic planning and implementation of “internationalisation at home” among staff and students. (see Recommendation under 1.5)

Commendations

- The Programme is commended for actively developing the curriculum according to international perspectives through international collaboration networks.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- See relevant Recommendation under 1.5

3.1 Study programme of Assistant pharmacist

General information

The Curriculum of Assistant Pharmacist is a normal three-year 180 ECTS HE degree (SD Appendix 4.1./4.4). The Curriculum is aimed principally at training assistant pharmacists to work in community pharmacies (SD Appendix 4.1. page 2). Roughly 90 percent of the assistant pharmacists on the labour market work in community pharmacies (SD Appendix 4.1. page 8). During the studies, all students will have two internship periods in community pharmacies, nine weeks during the second study year and a five-month-long internship period during the third study year (SD Appendix 4.1. pages 6 and 7, S). The Curriculum of Assistant Pharmacy was established in 1998 and some curriculum adjustments have been done since academic year 2015-2016 (SD Appendix 4.1. page 1). Admission to the Curriculum of Assistant Pharmacist is 32 students per year (SD Appendix 4.1. page 2).

3.1.1. Planning and management of studies

Evidence and Analysis

The Curriculum of Assistant Pharmacist is developed in accordance with current legislations and regulations in force (SD Appendix 4.1. page 1). The content and development are guided by the Curriculum Council and approved by the Council of the College. The views and proposals of teachers, students, alumni and employers are taken into consideration and discussed by the Curriculum Council, which consists of representatives of all groups of stakeholders. The developments executed have been based on labour market needs, changes in legislation and demographic changes in society, good examples being joint subject development between other curricula of the College and stronger contribution in client counselling skills of future assistant pharmacists.

The proposal for a new English-medium programme for Assistant Pharmacists is being explored at the moment by the College. The Assessment Panel found many areas still in need of attention before the programme could be formally launched with successful parameters (see details under 1.1, 1.5 and Recommendation in 1.7). The programme is likely to prove resource-intensive drawing on already-stretched existing resources without any clarity on the profile of prospective students and their post-graduation aims and broader career expectations. The Assessment Panel found the risks associated with this initiative as being particularly high and in need of additional analysis and mitigation before the programme could be successfully proposed.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- See relevant Recommendation under 1.7

3.1.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

Evidence and Analysis

As for the other programmes scrutinised, the Assessment Panel noted the atmosphere and communication culture among the staff, students and employers as being particularly open and inductive to effective study. Based on the College tour, the learning environment, i.e. teaching laboratories, their facilities and tools, in addition to technology support (basically in ICT) were at an adequate level to help the students achieve their learning outcomes (R). (see also Commendation in 1.2)

Teachers are very committed, and they have very interactive and personal relationship with the students (T, S). THCC has created a tutoring system which relies on peer support and is highly valued among students. (T, S). The possibility of E-learning is alternated with theoretical and practical periods (SD Appendix 4.1 page 5, S). Academic staff, students and employers are overall satisfied with the situation and competences acquired during the studies (M, T, S, E).

Similar to other programmes, the Assessment Panel found the practical training/internships periods in community pharmacies well-functioning, effective and supportive of achieving the programme's learning outcomes (E, S) (see also Commendation in 1.7)

The self-evaluation report states that the volume of elective courses is 5 ECTS, which is rather low, less than 5%, in respect to the volume of the whole curriculum (180 ECTS) (see also Recommendation in 1.7). The Programme would benefit from more diversity in respect its electives, as this would allow students to gain more specialised knowledge in the areas of interest and would also cater for specific competences and skills which cannot otherwise be enhanced during the compulsory components of the training.

Commendations

- The Programme is commended for the content and effective execution of the practical training periods within the curriculum, and the respective cooperation with the employers.
- See relevant Commendations in 1.2 and 1.7

Areas of concern and recommendations

- See relevant Recommendation in 1.7

3.1.3 Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

Evidence and Analysis

The number (9) and competency (in the College 70% of the teaching staff had a master or higher-level degree) of the teachers is at an adequate level and the number of PhDs is rising (SD Appendix 4.1. page 8). The teachers can develop their pedagogic skills by taking part in courses organised by THCC and pedagogical courses offered in Tallinn University (T, M).

Teaching staff's mobility is mostly done via Erasmus+ programme (SD Appendix 4.1 page 9). Assistant Pharmacist Curriculum has established cooperation with five HEIs. Based on the self-evaluation report the volume of teachers' outward mobility is not very high, nor is the number of international partners (SD Appendix 1 Table 43). Academic collaboration with domestic HEIs (e.g. University of Tartu) and Nordic institutes is rather low. Following the restructuring of the Estonian community pharmacy system, this will exhibit close similarities with the Swedish and Finnish systems and, as such, will be more conducive to intense collaborations/interactions amongst Nordic countries which should already be explored. Overall, the College (and specifically this Programme) would benefit from more intense collaborations to allow for up-to-date trends to be identified and implemented in a timely manner, for knowledge, skills and practices to be enhanced in line with other national, regional or international developments – this would be beneficial to staff and students and would set the College aside and allow it to increase its reputation, status and performance within the HE and VET sectors.

Suggestions for further improvement

- The Programme could benefit from closer and more intensive collaboration specifically with Nordic institutions, given anticipated synergies to be expected after the restructuring of the Estonian community pharmacy system.

4.1 Study programme of Health Promotion

General information

The curriculum of Health Promotion is relatively new and has been assessed by the committee. The aim of the curriculum of Health Promotion is to provide internationally recognized quality higher education for working in the field of Public Health. This is the only educational program in Estonia in health promotion. The re-development of this program has only recently been finalised and for this process the learning objectives are re-formulated, in line with international profiles (based on the guidelines of the International Union for Health Promotion and Education). The staff of the health promotion team is (to a high extend) renewed and well trained in specific content areas and in didactical methodologies.

These findings are relevant for the program of Health Promotion and to, a certain extend, for all programs at THCC. Nevertheless it gives the impression that the Health Promotion program is ahead in the development and can be seen in the described areas as best practices within THCC.

4.1.1. Planning and management of studies

Evidence and Analysis

Students and alumni (S) speak in positive terms about the Health Promotion programme. Students report they are strongly supported and guided and the responsibility for their own learning process is beyond any doubt. The students are active (S) and show an entrepreneurial and creative mindset during the learning process at the College and in extracurricular activities.

The content of the programme is well adjusted to the need of the society (E). Employers and other stakeholders have a voice in the content of the program through the Advisory board. The curriculum has been developed in close collaboration with a wide range of field experts and the Health promotion Union of Estonia, with which an agreement was signed in 2019 (SD). The graduates meet the expectations of the society (E).

The objectives of study programme(s) are recently re-written. Guidelines for course objectives and modules (including courses) and their learning outcomes are derived from international organisations like the International Union for health Promotion and Education and the Core competencies and professional standards for Health Promotion. The intended outcomes are concrete and coherent. The teaching content and methods and assessment criteria and methods support students in achieving their learning outcomes and developing their key competencies (S, E).

In the renewed curriculum attention for the development of creativity and entrepreneurship and other general competencies is visible in several ways of assessment.

Commendations

- The Programme is commended for the curriculum which is well-adjusted to national and international standards.
- The Programme is commended for the curriculum which relevantly supports the development of creativity, critical thinking and other 21st century skills.

4.1.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

Evidence and Analysis

The College provides information to secondary school learners to promote the study program and to give accurate information about the content. The admission is well organised and informative for candidates (SD, S). The efforts to give more information serves not only to attract the best fitting students but is also meant to reduce the drop-out rate (averagely 5/year).

Because of the relatively low numbers of students, the program is very individualised (taking into account the personal situation and possibilities/limitation of students).

The student evaluation system is focused on student's development and is elaborated for the entire curriculum. The individual approach and attention for formative assessment leads to a very personalised monitoring and student guidance system.

RDC is well integrated in the program (SD) and students are encouraged to manifest their achievements during (international) conferences.

The assessment and student guidance programs are in accordance with the learning outcomes. Summative and formative assessment methods are used and more and more integrated. The lecturers have acquired their required competencies (SD, S, T).

The internship opportunities are well fitting to the general objectives of the program and sufficient in number. The supervisors are very well informed about the content and objectives of the learning program and the students' personal objectives.

The majority of the graduates easily find fitting jobs on the labour market (E,S, SD)

The assessment program in the health Promotion curriculum is based on the intended learning outcomes and consists of formative and summative components. Lecturers are trained to develop and apply contemporary assessment methods (SD, T). Generic competencies like creativity and critical thinking are integrated in the assessment methods.

Commendations

- The Programme is commended for the integrated and outcomes-based approach to assessment which the assessment committee considers can serve as an example for the entire College.

4.1.3 Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

Evidence and Analysis

The team of lectures in the Health Promotion program has fully been replaced during the last years. All lecturers now have acquired education in Health Promotion and or in Public Health and they all have work experience. Frequently, guest lecturers are invited to contribute to the program (SD).

Lecturers have the opportunity and make use of additional trainings and international experiences, related to HP content, didactical issues and/or RDC. The staff is active in international networks. The number of exchange students in the HP is low (both for incoming and outgoing). According to the students (S) this is mainly attributed to their personal situation (side jobs, family obligations). Exchange experiences prove highly beneficial to students and allow them to develop their competences and better achieve the learning outcomes.

The relationship between the HP program and the partners in the working field is good: frequent communication in several ways; involvement in the in-school learning process by external experts; discussions in the advisory board etc.(E)

Attention for ethical issues is present in the entire curriculum (SD).

Commendations

- The Programme is commended for the way the curriculum is organised and the didactical methods which take a strong personalised approach.

Suggestions for further improvement

- The Programme may wish to intensify efforts to increase the numbers of outgoing and incoming students. The experience gained can offer direct benefits to students in respect of achieving overarching learning outcomes.

5. Assessment findings of the curriculum groups in vocational education and training (VET): Social work activities and counselling; Medical diagnostics and treatment technology; Therapy and rehabilitation; Child minding and services for the youth

Curriculum group	Study programme	Types of VET (Level of EQF) Forms of study (Full-time study school-based or workplace-based form of study; non-stationary study)	Academic unit responsible for the study programme
Social work activities and counselling	Care Worker	Level 4 Full-time study school and workplace based	Vocational Education Department
	Client Worker for People With Mental Health Problems	Level 4 Full-time study school and workplace based	
Medical diagnostics and treatment technology	Emergency Medical Technician	Level 4 Full-time study school and workplace based	Vocational Education Department
	Sterilisation Technician	Level 4 Full-time study school-based	
Therapy and rehabilitation	Assistive Technology Specialist	Level 4 Full-time study workplace based	Vocational Education Department
Child minding and services for the youth	Child Minder	Level 4 Full-time study school and workplace based	Vocational Education Department

General information

There are seven curricula in the department of vocational education, which are based on valid vocational standards and vocational education standard. Curriculum, module and subject volume in vocational education is considered in Estonian vocational education credits (ECVET). The volume of one academic year is 60 ECVET. The curricula of Care Worker consist of 120 ECVET with nominal duration of studies of 2 years. Other curricula consist of 60 ECVETs with a nominal duration of studies of 1 year (SD). In the framework of international projects, the College has developed vocational education curricula. For example, within the frames of ERASMUS+ strategic collaborative Project HELP the module of logistics was developed for pilot curricula of Care Worker curriculum study groups (SD).

5.1 Planning and management of studies

Evidence and Analysis

Generally, there is strong collaboration between the VET curricula and the workplace. However, there were different views about the involvement of stakeholders in curriculum development. Some stakeholders gave feedback that more involvement of employers would be beneficial in updating the curricula in the future, for example in updating of curricula of Care Worker and Client Worker for People With Mental Health Problems (E). Whereas others reported they had been actively involved in drawing up the curriculum for childminder, and that this process had also considered analysis results derived from assessment of employers' needs organised in kindergartens (E). Employers also had been actively involved in the preparation and updating of the Sterilization Technician curriculum (E). Students could also provide good input for curriculum development. For example, EMT students suggested extending their study time because the current curriculum is too intensive (S). Care worker and EMT students and employers gave the Panel feedback that level V curricula would better to acquire necessary study goal of students (E,S). Curriculum developers had the goal to develop the Childminder curriculum into the Teaching Assistant curriculum (T).

The Assessment Panel was informed by external stakeholders and employers that the College is acutely aware of the challenges they face with respect to labour market needs and current legislation (E). The Assessment Panel found employers to be satisfied with attitude and qualifications of all VET curricula alumni (E). All students confirmed that the study programmes support the development of organisational and entrepreneurship skills, and general competencies in area of ethics and patient education (S).

In the Self Evaluation of VET it is described that Department of vocational education uses the material and technical resources of the College on equal basis with other structural units (ED). The learning environment and support structures are supportive of students in achieving their learning outcomes. Both students and alumni were satisfied with their study environment and learning methodology (S,A).

All students expressed to the Panel their satisfaction with internship opportunities organized by the College (S). In the case of College-based and work-place based Care worker curriculum, internships in different areas (primary care, residential care and health care) were recommended by external stakeholders and employers (E). At the same time, the work-place based childminder students had the opportunity to do part of the internship in other kindergartens, and at the East Tallinn Central Hospital (sick child care) to ensure that all required learning outcomes will be achieved (S). Care workers rotate in different parts of hospital to get wide-ranging learning experience (M). Students of other curricula were also able to complete internships in different hospitals (S). The basic internship place for sterilization techniques is PERH (S).

Visit to one of the internship places gave the panel information of high satisfaction of the studies of childminders on work-place based training. Employers mentioned that this kind of possibility to study work-place based could be offered also for those who are with basic education only.

Commendations

- The College is commended for the consideration of and alignment with labour market needs and legislation of its VET programmes.

Suggestions for further improvement

- The College may wish to continue tight cooperation with employers to find out if and where VET curricula could be developed. In some instances their approach could be even more proactive than now. (see also 1.1)

5.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

Evidence and Analysis

Admission on VET curricula is both college-based and work-place based study form. Both study contexts prefer motivated students. Students have confirmed (S) that they are subject to balanced practical and theoretical education. Students described the benefits of learning from each other, as most are working people. For example, experiences were exchanged in communication, in the Moodle environment and in group work. (S). Students are generally satisfied with their learning environment and learning methods (S).

VET curricula are overviewed every year and adapted with employer's needs (E). All curricula have career-planning module (M). In the case of workplace-based learning, employers of care workers mentioned the need for internships in different places (primary care, social welfare and health services) so that the internship covers all the roles of a care worker (E). This would assure also the appropriate assessment of all learning outcomes of the curricula.

Some students choose to continue in HE curricula; however as RPL is not widely used (S), there might be unnecessary duplication. Therefore, the development of RPL would contribute also to continuation of studies of VET students.

There is a coordinator for every VET learning group. Students are supported by the coordinator to avoid unnecessary drop-out (M, S). All students highly value library, IT, and psychologist support and language learning; they are happy with their learning environment and learning methods (S). Some of the VET alumni mentioned in interview that they were always presented with interesting materials/tasks (A). VET students described the benefits of learning from each other, as most are working people. For example, experiences were exchanged in communication, in the Moodle environment and in group work (S).

A large part of education in VET is practical training in school and work-place environment. All students were very pleased with the clear and meaningful interlink between theory and practice, and with the opportunities to practice at the simulation centre and work-place environment (S). Internship performances are assessed on the basis of the internship goals and learning outcomes contained in the internship diary (S). There are internship supervisors in college and in work place.

Most of the supervisors work in tight cooperation, with school supervisors having shared the responsibilities of visiting students in their internship places (M).

This tight cooperation between school and workplace was reported also by employers of Midrimaa kindergarten, where the Childminder workplace based learning takes place (Visit Notes). Cooperation happens both through face-to-face meetings and e-mail correspondence and is active. Similarly, the visit to East-Tallinn Central Hospital nursing department revealed that internship supervisors and managers had clear understanding of the aims and system of internship, willingness to supervise and assess students. All students get supervisor for their internship period, who cooperates well with the school internship representative. Care workers are encouraged to take part of all range of activities during their internship (E). The personnel and equipment of the internship place were excellent. Some of EMT students were hoping to get more internship possibilities on Tallinn (S).

Some alumni of Care worker and EMT curricula voiced the opinion that there could be more refresher trainings for them in College (S). Some others hoped to have more electives during their studies, for example in leadership skills (S).

Language is one area of consideration in VET curricula. Those who are Russian-speakers can study in Russian-language curricula in Kohtla-Järve. In Tallinn, VET curricula are taught in Estonian. Additional support, electives included, is given to those who need extra help in either Estonian or Russian (T).

Panel got relevant information about assessment methods, noting that some VET study subjects are integrated and assessed as a module – anatomy, care basics, ergonomics. At the same time some subjects could be more integrated also between HE and VET (T) and inside of one module. (see Suggestion in 1.9)

The Assessment Panel did not find any major differences between VET curricula. Managers, teaching staff and students were all aligned with main areas of study – curriculum planning, creative and practical approach to teaching, support activities, assessment and further development of the curricula. The Panel did visit the employers of EMT and Childminder curricula and found these functioning well. We have confidence to believe (S,M,T) that it is true also about other curricula.

Also, the school learning environment of all four curricula was well established. For example the EMT simulation centre was impressive.

Commendations

- The College is commended for ensuring a clear and meaningful interlink between theory and practice in the design and delivery of the VET programmes.
- The College is commended for the modern infrastructure which positively supports educational processes, e.g. simulation centre. This gives especially high value to VET programmes
- The College is commended for the consistent and sufficient support offered across all study locations. This was particularly relevant for Kohtla-Järve study Centre and its VET students.

Suggestions for further improvement

- VET programmes may wish to intensify the induction they offer to students about what constitutes plagiarism and how to correctly use the text of other authors in their written work.

- Where possible and valid, the College might consider opening level V curricula (for example Care Worker, EMT, Childminder)
- The College may aim to achieve a system of holistic assessment of modules in the future, which does not fragment learning outcomes into different parts of module and assessment methods. This is particularly relevant for VET assessments.
- The College may consider better cooperation between HE and VET programmes which could encourage VET students to continue their studies
- The College may consider better integration of study programs which could be discussed between all four VET curricula (e.g. some overlapping introductory subjects).
- See also relevant Suggestion under 1.9

5.3 Development, cooperation and internationalisation of teaching staff

Evidence and Analysis

Most VET teachers are part-time practical specialists in the area they teach (M). Some trainings for teachers are provided by the College. There is a clear system of support beginner teachers. Mentors are offered and teachers without a degree in education are encouraged to go and take the training – whether as a degree program or a separate course (M,T).

VET teachers highlighted examples of pedagogical trainings in Tallinn University (T). However, the Panel could not identify the existence of systematic and planned teacher training related to the College's goals. (see Recommendation in 1.1)

Several of the college teaching staff members teach both on HE and VET curricula (M,T). However, the study programs could be even better integrated. This integration of study programs could be discussed also between all four VET curricula.

Training for working place practice supervisors is offered regularly. VET managers mentioned that sometimes the challenge is to get internship supervisors to come to school for training, but they keep trying to reach as many as possible (M).

There is international cooperation with other educational institutions (M). For example there is cooperation between project HELP and Care worker curriculum.” (SD, p.2, p.12)

Teachers can express their study needs in individual development discussions and these are met as much as possible. However, the Panel could not ascertain what the strategic priorities for teacher training were for coming years and how these would be planned for. This parallels the lack of clarity of strategic developments of the College and its Programmes.

Commendations

- The College is commended for the effective organisation and meaningful delivery of VET workplace experiences.

Areas of concern and recommendations

- See relevant Recommendation in 1.1

Suggestions for further improvement

- VET curricula may wish to further analyse teacher and supervisor needs from the point of College-wide institutional priorities, including for VET teachers, and derive a clear vision for training plans.